

1. A medication dispenser, comprising:
a pill compartment having an open end;
a tractor drive;
means for rotating said tractor drive;
5 a retainer belt that forms a loop around said tractor drive and said open end, said belt having a discharge port of substantially the same dimensions as said open end, a rotation of said tractor drive causing a rotation of said belt;
a programmable control unit;
a door compartment proximal to said open end; and
means for stopping said rotation in response to said discharge port being in a discharge alignment with said open end, the alignment providing a passageway from said open end through said discharge port to said door compartment where medication is dispensed, said control unit causing said rotation at a preprogrammed time after a door of said door compartment is opened.

2. The medication dispenser of claim 1 wherein said control unit causes an alarm of a preset pitch, tone, volume and duration in response to said discharge alignment.

3. The medication dispenser of claim 2 additionally comprising a speaker that provides said alarm.

4. The medication dispenser of claim 3 wherein said control unit causes a prerecorded voice message to be provided through said speaker in response to said door being opened.

5. The medication dispenser of claim 1 additionally comprising a display that provides preprogrammed medication instructions applicable to medication that is dispensed.

6. The medication dispenser of claim 1 additionally comprising a strobe light that is activated for a known duration in response to said discharge alignment.

7. The medication dispenser of claim 1 additionally comprising a high decibel screamer that is activated in response to said door not being opened within a preprogrammed period after said discharge alignment is attained.

8. The medication dispenser of claim 7 wherein said control unit accesses a telephone line in response to said door not being opened after said discharge alignment is attained, said control unit being adapted to provide an audio message via the telephone line.

9. The medication dispenser of claim 8 additionally comprising an emergency button that causes said control unit to access said telephone line.

10. The medication dispenser of claim 1 wherein said pill compartment has a floor that is angled downward from a vertical line.

11. The medication dispenser of claim 2 wherein said door compartment has a floor that is angled downward from a vertical line.

12. The medication dispenser of claim 1 wherein said means for stopping comprises:

a reflective positioning mark embedded within said belt; and

an optical sensor that transmits light, said positioning mark being positioned to receive the transmitted light and reflect it back to said sensor when the discharge alignment occurs, said sensor providing a stop signal to said control unit in response to the reflected light that causes said rotation to stop.

13. The medication dispenser of claim 1 additionally comprises a switch connected to

said door, said switch providing a start signal in response to said door being opened.

14. The medication dispenser of claim 1 wherein said means for rotating comprises;

a motor; and

means for coupling said motor to said tractor drive to cause rotation of said tractor drive in response to only one direction of rotation of said motor's shaft.

15. The medication dispenser of claim 6 wherein said means for coupling comprises:

a motor worm connected to said motor's shaft;

a worm gear that is coupled to said motor worm, said worm gear rotating in response to rotation of said motor; and

a ratchet pawl connected to said worm gear and said tractor drive, said ratchet pawl engaging said tractor drive when said motor's shaft rotates in said one direction.

16. The dispenser of claim 1 additionally comprising means for programming said control unit.

17. The dispenser of claim 1 wherein said programming means comprises:

a keypad connected to said control unit; and

a display connected to said control unit.

18. The dispenser of claim 1 wherein said programming means comprises:

a telephone interface circuit;

a communication link adapted for connection to a standard telephone line, said communication link being connected to said control unit; and

a display connected to said control unit.

19. The dispenser of claim 1 comprising:

a housing wherein said control unit is mounted; and

a rechargeable power supply mounted in a cartridge that is adapted for installation within said housing; and

5 means for connecting said power supply to said control unit when said cartridge is installed.

20. The dispenser of claim 19 wherein said pill compartment and said tractor drive are additionally mounted within said cartridge.